



Course Syllabus: course name

College of Education
Foundations of Special Education Sped-4113 Section X20
Spring 2026, Jan 20-March 20

Contact Information

Instructor: Dr. Emmanuel Sefah

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Course Description

Philosophical, historical, and legal foundations of special education. Introduction to roles and responsibilities of the special educator and legal and ethical requirements of the profession. Theoretical perspectives related to the nature and needs of persons with disabilities, involvement in disability advocacy.

Course Objectives/Learning Outcomes/Course Competencies

Table of Objectives

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| Candidates will evaluate current legislation pertaining to students with disabilities and their families, as well as ethical standards related to professional practices in the field. | Standard I: The special education teacher understands and applies knowledge of the philosophical, historical, and legal foundations of special education. The educational diagnostician understands and applies knowledge of the purpose, philosophy, and legal foundations of evaluation and special education. | Assigned Reading, Discussions, Class Activities, Professional Development Project |
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| <p>Candidates will discuss significant philosophical and historical aspects of special education, as well as emerging issues, practices and research in the field.</p> | <p>Standard I: The educational diagnostician understands and applies knowledge of ethical and professional practices, roles, and responsibilities</p> <p>The special education teacher understands and applies knowledge of the philosophical, historical, and legal foundations of special education.</p> | <p>Assigned Reading, Discussions, Class Activities, Professional Development Project</p> |
| <p>Candidates will discuss significant philosophical and historical aspects of special education, as well as emerging issues, practices and research in the field.</p> | <p>Standard I: The educational diagnostician understands and applies knowledge of ethical and professional practices, roles, and responsibilities</p> <p>The special education teacher understands and applies knowledge of the philosophical, historical, and legal foundations of special education.</p> | <p>Assigned Reading, Discussions, Class Activities, Professional Development Project</p> |
| <p>Candidates will describe effective communication strategies with parents</p> | <p>Standard III: The educational diagnostician develops</p> | <p>Assigned Reading, Discussions, Class Activities</p> |
| <p>from diverse backgrounds and professionals from other disciplines and community useful for those working with exceptional students.</p> | <p>collaborative relationships with families, educators, the school, the community, outside agencies, and related service personnel</p> <p>The special education teacher knows how to communicate and collaborate effectively in a variety of professional settings</p> | |

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| <p>Candidates will examine the roles and responsibilities of a special educator.</p> | <p>Standard II: The educational diagnostician understands and applies knowledge of ethical and professional practices, roles, and responsibilities.</p> <p>The special education teacher applies knowledge of professional roles and responsibilities and adheres to legal and ethical requirements of the profession.</p> | <p>Assigned Reading, Discussions, Class Activities, Professional Development Project</p> |
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Textbook & Instructional Materials

Kauffman, J. et al. (2018). Special Education: What it is and Why we Need it. Taylor & Francis, New York. ISBN 978-0415792318

Study Hours and Tutoring Assistance

If you need assistance, please email me to schedule a meeting. We can meet in person or via Zoom.

Student Handbook

Refer to: [Student Handbook](#)

Academic Misconduct Policy & Procedures

Academic Dishonesty: Cheating, collusion, and plagiarism (the act of using source material of other persons, either published or unpublished, without following the accepted techniques of crediting, or the submission for credit of work not the individual's to whom credit is given). Additional guidelines on procedures in these matters may be found in the Office of Student Conduct.

[Office of Student Conduct](#)

Moffett Library

Moffett Library provides resources and services to support student's studies and assignments, including books, peer-reviewed journals, databases, and multimedia materials accessible both on campus and remotely. The library offers media equipment checkout, reservable study rooms, and research assistance from librarians to help students effectively find, evaluate, and use information.

Get started on this [Moffett Library webpage](#) to explore these resources and learn how to best utilize the library.

Grading

Table 1: Points allocated to each assignment

| Assignments | Points |
|---|--------|
| Discussion Boards (4 @ 25 points) | 100 |
| Professional Development Project (Grad students IRIS Activities (Undergrad) | 100 |
| Group Assignment | 80 |
| Chapter Textbook Response (Each chapter, 5 Total) | 150 |
| Lecture Notes (2 total) | 70 |
| Final Exam (Comprehensive, All Readings, and Lecture, Textbook) | 100 |
| Total | 600 |

Table 2: Total points for final grade.

| Grade | Points |
|-------|--------------|
| A | 540-600 |
| B | 480-539 |
| C | 420-479 |
| D | 360-419 |
| F | 359 or below |

Exams

Exams will cover all course materials, and it will be worth 100 point.

Projects Required

1. Graduate students will have a Professional Development Project focusing on the history of specific learning disabilities (SLD). You will be assigned a small group to present your project. Detailed instructions will be posted with a video.
2. Undergraduates will not do a professional development project but will do an IRIS Project. Detailed instructions will be posted with a video.
3. There are three recorded lectures. You must submit a one-page lecture summary to receive credit.

Discussion Board activities

Discussion Board activities: Each discussion (4 total) will have a prompt or topic. You will get 15 points if you provide a thoughtful response and 10 points if you respond to two other post.

Small Group Activities

This discussion will allow students to deepen their understanding of how timelines and procedural safeguards play a critical role in the decision-making process for students with disabilities. It will also help future educators and advocates recognize the importance of clear communication, transparency, and active parent participation in the educational planning process. In the group discussion, you will explore the various timelines and key documents involved in the ARD (Admission, Review, and Dismissal) process, with a particular focus on parent and student participation, procedural safeguards, and confidentiality. Understanding these timelines and documents is essential for ensuring that families are informed and involved in the educational decisions made for students with disabilities. **Due 3/7 at 10:00 pm.**

Textbook Response

Textbook Response (5 total): graduate students are expected to a) write a two-page response for each chapter that applies this information. Your paper should show evidence that you understood the issues presented and provide examples of the book's contents in your experience/practice. Undergraduate students are expected to write a two-page response that summarizes this information and how this will help you be a better teacher and advocate for students with disabilities.

Lecture Notes

There will be one live Zoom lecture on February 13 from 5:30–6:30 p.m., and recorded lectures will also be provided for students to view independently. Students are required to submit two sets of lecture notes, including one set from the live lecture and one set from a recorded lecture, and the notes should reflect key concepts, terminology, and important takeaways from each lecture.

Final Exam

Exams will cover all course materials, and it will be worth 100 point. Final Exams will cover all course materials (Comprehensive, All Readings, and Lecture, Textbook). Finals consist of 20 True/False questions. Each is worth 5 points. You have 60 minutes to complete the quiz.

Extra Credit

Extra credit assignments will not be given in this course.

Late Work

Please adhere to due dates. If you are struggling with time management, please communicate with the professor. Incompletes will only be given for documented medical emergencies/medical conditions/death.

Make Up Work/Tests

Make up work will only be accepted in extreme circumstances (death in the family, illness, etc). I must be contacted prior to the due date and appropriate documentation must be provided.

Important Dates

- Last day for term schedule changes: January 23, 2026 Check date on [Academic Calendar](#).
- Deadline to file for graduation: February 16, 2026. Check date on [Academic Calendar](#).
- Last Day to drop with a grade of "W": April 29, 2026. Check date on [Academic Calendar](#).
- Refer to: [Drops, Withdrawals & Void](#)

Desire-to-Learn (D2L)

Extensive use of the MSU D2L program is a part of this course. Each student is expected to be familiar with this program as it provides a primary source of communication regarding assignments, examination materials, and general course information. You can log into [D2L](#) through the MSU Homepage. If you experience difficulties, please contact the technicians listed for the program or contact your instructor.

Attendance

Students are expected to attend all meetings of the classes in which they are enrolled. Although in general students are graded on intellectual effort and performance rather than attendance, absences may lower the student's grade where class attendance and class participation are deemed essential by the faculty member. In those classes where attendance is considered as part of the grade, the instructor should so inform students of the specifics in writing at the beginning of the semester in a syllabus or separate attendance policy statement. An instructor who has an attendance policy must keep records on a daily basis. The instructor must give the student a verbal or written warning prior to being

dropped from the class. Instructor's records will stand as evidence of absences. A student with excessive absences may be dropped from a course by the instructor. Any individual faculty member or college has the authority to establish an attendance policy, providing the policy is in accordance with the General University Policies.

Online Computer Requirements

Taking an online class requires you to have access to a computer (with Internet access) to complete and upload your assignments. It is your responsibility to have (or have access to) a working computer in this class. ***Assignments and tests are due by the due date, and personal computer technical difficulties will not be considered reason for the instructor to allow students extra time to submit assignments, tests, or discussion postings.** Computers are available on campus in various areas of the buildings as well as the Academic Success Center. ***Your computer being down is not an excuse for missing a deadline!!** There are many places to access your class! Our online classes can be accessed from any computer in the world which is connected to the internet. Contact your instructor immediately upon having computer trouble. If you have technical difficulties in the course, there is also a student helpdesk available to you. The college cannot work directly on student computers due to both liability and resource limitations however they are able to help you get connected to our online services. For help, log into [D2L](#).

Instructor Class Policies

Regular attendance and active participation in all class discussions are essential for success in this course. Students are expected to attend all scheduled class meetings (via Zoom) and to engage meaningfully in discussions and activities. Students are expected to demonstrate professionalism at all times. This includes respectful communication, academic integrity, and appropriate behavior during class meetings/discussion. All official course communication will occur through university email and D2L. Students are responsible for checking their email and course announcements regularly. If you have questions or need assistance, please email me. Meetings may be scheduled in person or via Zoom, depending on availability and student preference. All assignments must be submitted by the stated deadlines. Late submissions may result in point deductions unless prior arrangements have been approved due to extenuating circumstances. Students are responsible for ensuring that assignments are uploaded correctly. Technical issues are not an acceptable excuse for late or missing work.

Change of Schedule

A student dropping a course (but not withdrawing from the University) within the first 12 class days of a regular semester or the first four class days of a summer semester is eligible for a 100% refund of applicable tuition and fees. Dates are published in the Schedule of Classes each semester.

Refund and Repayment Policy

A student who withdraws or is administratively withdrawn from Midwestern State University (MSU) may be eligible to receive a refund for all or a portion of the tuition, fees and room/board charges that were paid to MSU for the semester. **HOWEVER**, if the student received financial aid (federal/state/institutional grants, loans and/or scholarships), all or a portion of the refund may be returned to the financial aid programs. As described below, two formulas (federal and state) exists in determining the amount of the refund. (Examples of each refund calculation will be made available upon request).

Services for Students with Disabilities

In accordance with Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Midwestern State University endeavors to make reasonable accommodations to ensure equal opportunity for qualified persons with disabilities to participate in all educational, social, and recreational programs and activities. After notification of acceptance, students requiring accommodations should make application for such assistance through Disability Support Services, located in the Student Wellness Center, (940) 397-4140. Current documentation of a disability will be required in order to provide appropriate services, and each request will be individually reviewed. For more details, please go to [Disability Support Services](#).

College Policies

Campus Carry Rules/Policies

Refer to: [Campus Carry Rules and Policies](#)

Smoking/Tobacco Policy

College policy strictly prohibits the use of tobacco products in any building owned or operated by WATC. Adult students may smoke only in the outside designated-smoking areas at each location.

Alcohol and Drug Policy

To comply with the Drug Free Schools and Communities Act of 1989 and subsequent amendments, students and employees of Midwestern State are informed that strictly enforced policies are in place which prohibits the unlawful possession, use or distribution of any illicit drugs, including alcohol, on university property or as part of any university-sponsored activity. Students and employees are also subject to all applicable legal sanctions under local, state and federal law for any offenses involving illicit drugs on University property or at University-sponsored activities.

Campus Carry

Effective August 1, 2016, the Campus Carry law (Senate Bill 11) allows those licensed individuals to carry a concealed handgun in buildings on public university campuses, except in locations the University establishes has prohibited. The new Constitutional Carry law does not change this process. Concealed carry still requires a License to Carry permit, and openly carrying handguns is not allowed on college campuses. For more information, visit [Campus Carry](#).

Active Shooter

The safety and security of our campus is the responsibility of everyone in our community. Each of us has an obligation to be prepared to appropriately respond to threats to our campus, such as an active aggressor. Please review the information provided by MSU Police Department regarding the options and strategies we can all use to stay safe during difficult situations. For more information, visit [MSUREady – Active Shooter](#). Students are encouraged to watch the video entitled "Run. Hide. Fight." which may be electronically accessed via the University police department's webpage: ["Run. Hide. Fight."](#)

Grade Appeal Process

Update as needed. Students who wish to appeal a grade should consult the Midwestern State University [MSU Catalog](#)

***Notice:** Changes in the course syllabus, procedure, assignments, and schedule may be made at the discretion of the instructor.

Course Schedule:

| Week or Module | Activities/Assignments/Exams | Due Date |
|---------------------|--|-------------------|
| Week 1 Jan 20-24 | Read Chapter 1: Education Is Often Misunderstood. Listen to Recorded Lecture 1 Textbook Response 1 Discussion 1 | 1/24 at 10:00 pm. |
| Week 2 Jan 25-31 | Read Chapter 2: Measurement of Educational Performance. Textbook Response 2 Discussion 2 | 1/31 at 10:00 pm |

| Week or Module | Activities/Assignments/Exams | Due Date |
|---------------------|---|--|
| Week 3 Feb 1-7 | <p>Chapter 3: The Nature of Educational Disabilities.</p> <p>Listen to Recorded Lecture 2 (Child Find)</p> <p>Submit Lecture Summary (Lecture #1)</p> <p>Textbook Response 3</p> | 2/7 at 10:00 pm |
| Week 4 Feb 8-14 | <p>Chapter 4: The Nature of Educational Disabilities</p> <p>Textbook Response #4</p> <p>Discussion 3 (Inclusion)</p> <p>Attend Live Lecture on Zoom on Friday 2/13 and Submit Lecture Summary Notes</p> <p>Lecture #2 Notes Due in Week 4</p> | <p>2/14/2025 at 10:00 pm.</p> <p>Time 5:30 pm-6:30.</p> |
| Week 5 Feb 15-21 | <p>Review IRIS Module (IEP)</p> <p>Discussion 4</p> <p>Submit Live Lecture #2</p> | 2/21 at 10:00 pm. |
| Week 6 Feb 22-28 | <p>Chapter 5: Tiers of Education.</p> <p>Listen to Recorded Lecture- Behavior</p> <p>Textbook Response #5</p> | 2/28 at 10:00 pm. |

| Week or Module | Activities/Assignments/Exams | Due Date |
|-----------------------|--|---|
| Week 7 March 1-7 | Chapter 6: Frequent Criticisms and Responses to Them Small Group Discussion Assignment | 3/7/2025 at 10:00 pm. |
| Week 8 March 8-14 | Professional Development Project | 3/14 at 10:00 pm. |
| Week 9 March 15-20 | Final Exam over course materials | **Note that this is a short week. Final Exam is due 03/20 at 10:00 pm. |

References/Scientifically-Based Research/Additional Readings:

Decker, Hale, & Flanagan, D. (2013). Professional practice issues in the assessment of cognitive functioning for educational applications. *Psychology in the Schools*. 50. 10.1002/pits.21675.

Hale, J., Alfonso, V., Berninger, V., Bracken, B., Christo, C., Clark, E., ...Schultz, E.K. (2010). Critical Issues in response-to-intervention, comprehensive evaluation, and specific learning disabilities identification and intervention: An expert white paper consensus. *Learning Disabilities Quarterly*, 33, 223-236.

Schrank, F. A., Mather, N., & McGrew, K. S. (2014). Technical Manual: Woodcock-Johnson IV. Itasca, IL: Riverside Publishing.

Schultz, E.K., & Stephens-Pisecco, T.L. (2018). Using the Core-Selective Evaluation Process to identify a PSW: Integrating Research, Practice, and Policy, *Special Education Research, Policy & Practice*, Fall 2018

Appendix A: Standards/Competencies

The TExES Educational Diagnostician (253) exam is designed to assess whether an examinee has the requisite knowledge and skills that an entry-level educator in this field in Texas public schools must possess. These are aligned with §239.80. General Provision in the TAC and Advanced Specialty Set: Educational Diagnostician Specialist <https://exceptionalchildren.org/standards/cec-advanced-specialty-set- educational-diagnostician-specialist>

Gradate Standards

- A. Apply knowledge of characteristics and educational implications of disabilities for students of different ages, in various environments, and from culturally and linguistically diverse populations.
- B. Demonstrate knowledge of evidence-based instruction and curricula for the development of individual students' academic skills within the continuum of services in the least restrictive environment (LRE).
- C. Demonstrate knowledge of targeted instructional strategies, technology, and curriculum materials to address the individual needs of students with disabilities within the continuum of services.
- D. Apply knowledge of making individualized recommendations to assist the Admission, Review, and Dismissal (ARD) committee in developing appropriate and ambitious Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) that target students' individual academic needs and goals.

- A. Apply knowledge of characteristics and educational implications of disabilities for students of different ages, in various environments, and from culturally and linguistically diverse populations.
- B. Demonstrate knowledge of evidence-based instruction and curricula for the development of individual students' academic skills within the continuum of services in the least restrictive environment (LRE).
- C. Demonstrate knowledge of targeted instructional strategies, technology, and curriculum materials to address the individual needs of students with disabilities within the continuum of services.
- D. Apply knowledge of making individualized recommendations to assist the Admission, Review, and Dismissal (ARD) committee in developing appropriate and ambitious Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) that target students' individual academic needs and goals.

- A. Demonstrate knowledge of effective culturally responsive consultation and collaboration skills (e.g., knowledge of family systems, parents/guardians supporting student development and educational progress).
- B. Apply understanding of the special education process to assist parents/guardians and school staff in navigating through initial referral, Individualized Education Program (IEP) development, reevaluations, transition planning, and dismissal and/or graduation.
- C. Apply knowledge of the roles of students with disabilities, parents/guardians, teachers, and other school and community personnel in collaborating on and planning Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) for students.
- D. Apply knowledge of strategies for encouraging students' and families' active participation in the educational team, addressing families' concerns, and fostering respectful and beneficial relationships between families and education professionals.
- H. Demonstrate knowledge of organizations and publications relevant to the field of educational diagnosis and recognize the importance of engaging in activities that foster professional competence and benefit individuals with exceptional learning needs, their families, and/or colleagues.

Undergraduate Standards

- A. Knows characteristics of individuals with different types of disabilities, including individuals with different levels of severity and multiple disabilities across eligibility categories, and analyzes the impact of various disabilities on learning and experience.
- B. Knows how the developmental, academic, social, career and functional characteristics of individuals with disabilities relate to levels of support needed and applies knowledge of human development and disabilities to plan and implement appropriate curriculum.
- I. Understands ways in which physical disabilities and health impairments relate to development and behavior and knows the etiologies and effects of sensory disabilities and other conditions affecting individuals with disabilities.
- B. Knows curricula for developing cognitive, academic, social, language, affective, motor, functional, transition and career life skills for individuals with disabilities.

- C. Knows the role of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) in developing Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) for students with disabilities and applies skills for sequencing, implementing and evaluating individual learning objectives.
- D. Applies procedures for developing and using Individualized Education Program (IEP) objectives to plan instruction for individuals with disabilities.
- E. Prepares, adapts and organizes materials to implement developmentally appropriate and age-appropriate lesson plans based on Individualized Education Program (IEP) objectives for individuals with disabilities.
- F. Applies knowledge of issues, resources and appropriate strategies for teaching students with disabilities in specialized settings (e.g., alternative schools, special centers, hospitals, residential facilities), including transitions to and from school- and community-based settings.
- G. Knows how to collaborate with other professionals to interpret and use sensory, mobility, reflex and perceptual information to create appropriate learning plans (e.g., sensory stimulation, physical positioning, lifting).
- H. Understands the reciprocal nature of assessment and instruction; applies skills for effective instruction in the least restrictive setting for individuals with disabilities.
- I. Knows how the general or special classroom and other learning environments (e.g., home, job site, cafeteria, transportation, community) impact student learning and behavior and applies strategies for planning educational environments that promote students' learning, active participation, communication, self-advocacy, increased independence and generalization of skills.
- J. Identifies ways in which technology can assist in planning and managing instruction for individuals with disabilities.
- K. Knows how to use local, state and federal resources to assist in programming for individuals with disabilities.

WCOE Standards (InTASC):

The outcomes for graduates of professional programs are based upon knowledge, skills, and dispositions in the following 10 elements:

The Learner and Learning

Standard #1: Learner Development

Standard #2: Learning Differences

Standard #3: Learning Environments

Content Knowledge

Standard #4: Content Knowledge

Standard #5: Application of Content

Instructional Practice

Standard #6: Assessment

Standard #7: Planning for Instruction

Standard #8: Instructional Strategies

Professional Responsibility

Standard #9: Professional Learning and Ethical Practice

Standard #10: Leadership and Collaboration

[https://ccsso.org/sites/default/files/2017-11/InTASC Model Core Teaching Standards 2011.pdf](https://ccsso.org/sites/default/files/2017-11/InTASC%20Model%20Core%20Teaching%20Standards%202011.pdf)